Eli's Rehab Report

Industry News: Ramp Up Your At-Home Therapy Options For Stroke Patients

New study reveals intensity of physical therapy -- not location -- matters most.

You may receive more referrals for stroke patients requiring athome therapy, thanks to a new study unveiled at the **American Stroke Association's** International Stroke Conference in Los Angeles.

In the largest stroke rehabilitation study ever conducted in the U.S., stroke patients who had physical therapy at home improved their ability to walk just as well as those who were treated in a training program that requires the use of a body-weight supported treadmill device followed by walking practice, says the **National Institutes of Health** in a release.

The study researchers from the **Duke University** School of Medicine had expected the so-called locomotor training to show results superior to the intensive home-based program, but the results were equivalent. And either form of therapy was better than lower intensity physical therapy," physician **Walter Koroshetz,** deputy director of NIH's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, says in the release.

Further, "patients continued to improve up to one year after stroke, defying conventional wisdom that recovery occurs early and tops out at six months," NIH notes. "In fact, even patients who started rehabilitation as late as six months after stroke were able to improve their walking."

Best: But "the study found that earlier was better when it comes to rehabilitation therapy," NIH points out. "The patients who were not assigned to a study group until six months after their stroke recovered only about half as much as the participants who received one of the two therapy programs at two months."

Patients who participated in the home program also had a lower drop-out rate compared to the locomotor program (3 versus 13 percent), and they experienced fewer falls, the study found.

At the end of one year, 52 percent of all the study participants had made significant improvements in their ability to walk, NIH concludes. More information is at www.ninds.nih.gov/img/LEAPS_locomotor_training.jpeg.